

## DOWN TOWN CLUB

Where Busy Men Enjoy the Daily Luncheon Hour.

ECONOMY IN TIME AND MONEY

A Center of Interest Where Commercial Leaders Meet.

## OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

ABOUT FOUR years ago it occurred to two or three of Washington's most active business men that life is short, art is long, time is money, and that a number of old-fashioned adages to the same effect were just then peculiarly applicable to the present case and situation. They realized that a certain fraction of the working time of each day was practically wasted in struggles with indifferent food at luncheon, involving extravagance of time, money and digestion. They began to consider the possibility of devising some plan of both satisfying their appetites and engagements lists, and as a result the organization known as the Down Town Club was formed, almost without a prototype in this country.

It was fortunate that at just about this season the Washington Loan and Trust Company building, at the corner of F and 9th streets, was drawing near to completion, and by a happy thought the two facts were united and the new club was as soon as possible installed in the most ideal quarters. The club is still there, and will probably remain as long as it and the building exist. Both being constructed of the most solid and substantial materials there is no thought that they will not become landmarks together, the one of the architectural stability of Washington and the other of the peculiarly delightful social foundation that is at the base of Washington's business enterprises.

The Down Town Club is in itself really little more than a restaurant run for the exclusive use of certain men who have banded themselves together in order to obtain the advantages of good surroundings at meal time and an excellent cuisine accompanied by thrills of bankruptcy. It is now composed of two hundred and seventeen members, and the roll is practically a roll of the city's business and professional life. Every profession and line of business is represented. The regulations as to membership are not unduly strict, and any person of good standing in the community known to a member of the board of governors can become a member of the club after surrendering the usual initiation fee of \$10. This fee and the monthly dues of \$2 each are required to meet the current expenses of the club, such as rent, clerk hire and other attendance, and the prices charged for meals are as near the actual cost as it is possible for prices to be.

**Principle of Co-operation.** In this way the club, being co-operative, is enabled, by abandoning all profits, to give the greatest possible return to its members for the least possible expenditure. This, of course, attracts a good many men, but it is a curious fact in the hard times that have recently swept over Washington, along with the rest of the commercial world, there has been a slight falling off in the membership, as club expenses are among the first items of luxury to be cut off by business men in a financial stress of weather.

But there are advantages other and greater than those of economy and gastronomy that attract the doctors, lawyers, merchants, journalists, clerks and other representatives of the business world to the Down Town Club. It is not an exaggeration to state that some of the most important business transactions of the city have been planned, discussed and consummated over the lunch tables of this popular organization.

It is about the only place in the city where business men can meet at meal time and talk over commercial matters in perfect freedom from the fee nuisance.

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The club is not burdened with an excess of government. The general control of matters is vested in a board of governors, meeting the second Tuesday of every month. This meeting, which lasts about a quarter of an hour, is preceded by a dinner. The direct control of the club's affairs is given to the house committee of three members, who attend to details of management after the fashion of similar committees in other clubs. The chairman of this committee, which in other organizations is the object of constant and annoying complaints from members, said to the reporter that the club body was a pleasure rather than a burden.

In his term of service the committee had had but one serious complaint, and that proved to be on a most trivial subject. This is all the more surprising, as it is not the easiest thing in the world to cater to the tastes of a hundred or more members daily. The menu is changed constantly, and evidently to the perfect satisfaction of every member of the club, as is usually so small as to be undiscoverable. Credit is limited to \$50, and the club has been remarkably free from annoyance by the loss of revenue. The annual election of

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Benj. Durfee, Geo. E. Dowell (non-resident), Wm. A. Day, M. Durfee, J. C. Dowell, Frank P. Davis, Fred. G. Dietrich, Henry E. Davis, Jno. J. Edson, N. T. Elliott, Jos. R. Edson, Jno. C. Edwards (non-resident), H. D. Feast, Albert F. Fox, R. T. Frazier, Chas. W. Fairfax, R. F. Fisher, Thos. Francis, Jr., S. T. Flaherty, Warren W. Foster, Eugene E. Fox, Geo. K. Fronech, Chas. L. Freiley, Richard C. Fellows, Noyes, McGill, Chas. W. G. Gurley, Thos. M. Gale, A. P. Greeley, M. H. Goodrich (non-resident), A. Hamilton, C. T. Havenner, O. P. Harr, Irving H. Hart, Wm. H. Heald, Jas. B. Henderson, W. H. Hoppy, S. G. Hopkins, Thos. S. Hopkins, Geo. W. Howard, Philip T. Hall, R. Edwin Joyce, Jos. R. Johnson, Walter J. Johnson.

Jas. J. Kay (non-resident), S. H. Kauffmann, A. M. Kendall, C. B. Keferstein, L. Loano, Jas. L. Lupton, A. Maurice Loeb, R. E. Lewis, H. B. Leach, Meyer Loeb, A. Leavell, P. J. McHenry, Geo. C. Maynard, W. F. Mattingly, Allen de C. Miller, R. C. Moore, R. S. Moser, R. Martin, J. Noyes, J. W. H. Michener, Thos. P. Morgan, Jr., W. H. Merrill, Thos. C. M. M. Middleton, Jno. T. Miller, Chas. D. Maxwell, D. P. Merrill, Jr., A. C. Moses, L. M. Marble, Thos. C. Noyes, W. J. Newton, H. Beach, Noyes, McGill, Chas. W. G. Gurley, Thos. M. Gale, A. P. Greeley, M. H. Goodrich (non-resident), A. Hamilton, C. T. Havenner, O. P. Harr, Irving H. Hart, Wm. H. Heald, Jas. B. Henderson, W. H. Hoppy, S. G. Hopkins, Thos. S. Hopkins, Geo. W. Howard, Philip T. Hall, R. Edwin Joyce, Jos. R. Johnson, Walter J. Johnson.

**The Club Quarters.** The quarters of the club are handsome and tasteful without being excessively luxurious. There are three large dining rooms, two for the use of the men and one, recently enlarged, for the use of the ladies of the families of members. One of the dining rooms for men is set apart for the use of smokers, while into the other room no fumes of tobacco ever penetrate. In addition there is a non-smoking lavatory, and a reading room, where members may pass the time comfortably. It is a delightful privilege to sit in the club, and this is of exceptional value to the average man of business who seeks to entertain visitors from other cities or guests from home, and who has not the facilities at home, or who, being a bachelor, has no suitable place where to entertain.

There is also a list of non-resident members who are admitted at reduced rates and who find in the Down Town Club a charming place for satisfying their hunger whenever they visit this city. Another feature of the club that has been established but comparatively recently is a correspondence system whereby members residing in other cities on business trips are given cards of introduction to certain clubs there that admit them to all the privileges of membership.

The extension of the rights of membership to include women is of exceptional value to the wives of members and other ladies of the families who desire to economize time while on shopping trips down town by dining without returning home. They are permitted to bring their friends and relatives to the club, which is kept entirely excluded from other apartments, is often filled with some of Washington's most charming women.

**Freedom from the Fee Nuisance.** One of the great objectionable features of eating away from home these days is the tipping system, that has grown to be almost as great a burden to the diner or luncher in this country as it is abroad. In the Down Town Club this problem is simply solved by making it an offense punishable by dismissal for any attendant to receive a gratuity or tip of any sort. In this manner all the patrons of the lunch and dining room are freed from the same, and the result is a remarkably beneficial to the health and temper of the members and has equally as good an effect upon the waiters themselves, who are more cheerful, active and conscientious in their service. They are permitted to bring their friends and relatives to the club, which is kept entirely excluded from other apartments, is often filled with some of Washington's most charming women.

The membership of the club has varied, 300 being the high water mark. Lunch has been served for as many as 110 members in a day. The average is between 90 and 100 members who avail themselves of this privilege. There are not so many who breakfast or dinner, but the latter meal is naturally more popular than the former. Members whose families leave the city for the summer find it especially convenient to be enabled to obtain their meals in this way.

The club is not burdened with an excess of government. The general control of matters is vested in a board of governors, meeting the second Tuesday of every month. This meeting, which lasts about a quarter of an hour, is preceded by a dinner. The direct control of the club's affairs is given to the house committee of three members, who attend to details of management after the fashion of similar committees in other clubs. The chairman of this committee, which in other organizations is the object of constant and annoying complaints from members, said to the reporter that the club body was a pleasure rather than a burden.

In his term of service the committee had had but one serious complaint, and that proved to be on a most trivial subject. This is all the more surprising, as it is not the easiest thing in the world to cater to the tastes of a hundred or more members daily. The menu is changed constantly, and evidently to the perfect satisfaction of every member of the club, as is usually so small as to be undiscoverable. Credit is limited to \$50, and the club has been remarkably free from annoyance by the loss of revenue. The annual election of

officers occurs in January, and is conducted at the lunch hour. This club was organized on the 14th of September, 1891. There is one somewhat similar in New York city, but it is said to have been organized with quite the same features as the Washington Down Town Club.

In addition to supplying the wants of its members, the club has been a place for the winter to serve dinners and banquets to alumni and other associations on the occasion of their annual meetings. It has been enabled to make low rates for these affairs, and last winter had almost all such engagements as it could meet.

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